Spotlight

United States Office of Personnel Management

Published in the interest of affirmative employment programs

Volume 13 Number 1 November–December 1980

New Standards For The Equal Occupations Opportunity

The shape of the equal opportunity occupation is changing as fast as Washington weather on a fall afternoon. Only yesterday, or at least a few years ago, the equal opportunity occupation didn't exist. Today, the functions are so varied and the work so diverse that it has over-flowed the boundaries of a single occupation.

Brand new 1980 model occupational standards are coming soon to replace the old 1972 models now in effect. New titles like equal opportunity manager, civil rights analyst, and equal opportunity assistant will be in use early next year in some Federal agencies. But more than just the titles are new. Nine (count them, NINE) new classification and qualification standards are about to be released to Federal agencies. What these standards will do is important to all equal opportunity workers.

The nine new equal opportunity standards:

- establishes four new equal opportunity series including
  - (1) an internal Federal EEO series in the GS-200, Personnel Management and Industrial Relations Group.
  - (2) a research series,
  - (3) a compliance series, and
  - (4) a technician series;
- provides job grading guidelines for each of the four new series—the first time grade level criteria have been published specifically for the equal opportunity occupations;
- updates minimum qualification requirements geared more closely to each individual new series; and
- establishes revised qualification requirements for EEO collateral assignments.

One effect of the three-series concept is that the Equal Employment Opportunity Series, covering internal Federal EEO positions, can be placed in the GS-200, Personnel Management and Industrial Relations Group. This should have some positive implications for career mobility between the personnel and internal Federal EEO occupations. It also emphasizes the similarities and interrelationships between the EEO and personnel functions. But establishment of this new series is completely unrelated to agency management decisions to either separate or combine personnel and EEO functions organizationally.

Like all other occupational standards, these new standards are tools. The position classification standards are for determining the proper grade level and series; the qualifications standards are for determining if job applicants have the kinds of skills and knowledges needed for the job.

Occupational standards can provide examples of how jobs can be designed. The new classification standard for the Equal Employment Opportunity Series, GS-260, provides benchmark position examples that stress EEO consulting roles. The standard presents the occupation as one of advisors to top management who also are advocates for EEO—as all management advisors are advocates for their particular program areas. It focuses on the analytical, evaluative, and communication tasks of equal employment managers. It illustrates their roles as organizational change agents who identify institutional barriers to EEO and develop concrete action to change the policies and practice of the agencies they serve.

As tools, these standards will have an impact only when they are used properly. That's why it's so important to understand what these standards cannot do.

- The new Equal Employment Opportunity Series classification standard does not prescribe organizational structures. For example, it does not say that equal opportunity positions should or should not be

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Collection of Racial and National Origin Identification on Applicants

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has issued two FPM Letters which address the collection of race, sex, and national origin identification on applicants for Federal employment. These letters authorize the collection of this type of information and provide instruction for its maintenance and use.

FPM Letter 720-4 was issued on January 15, 1980. It authorizes Federal agencies to collect race and national origin information from applicants for Federal employment who are not currently Federal employees (outside applicants). It also authorizes the use of summary statistics gleaned from data in the Central Personnel Data File and in agencies' internal minority group designator files to meet the statistical reporting requirements of the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (UGESP). Agencies are authorized to use these data to determine the impact of selection procedures, to implement and evaluate Federal Equal Employment Recruitment Program (FEORP) activities and affirmative action programs, to evaluate personnel/organizational measurement and selection methods, and to locate individuals for personnel research studies.

FPM Letter 720-4 describes a government-wide system of records in accordance with the Privacy Act designed to protect the confidentiality of the information collected from applicants. Methods of maintaining the data, the length of time the data are to be kept, and authorized routine uses of the data, including categories of users and the purposes of such uses, are presented. The Letter states that under no circumstances should race, sex, or national origin identification accompany an individual's application when it is under consideration by a selecting official.

FPM Letter 720-4 also describes OPM's Form 1386, an instrument developed for agency use in the collection of race and national origin information from applicants. Specific instructions concerning the use of this form are given. The issue of the differences between the categories used in agencies' minority group designations and those required by the UGESP and FEORP is addressed and a crosswalk for equating the two sets of categories is presented.

A list of key people who can be contacted for information and assistance in such areas as data collection, the UGESP, the Privacy Act, FEORP, and staffing problems is also provided.

FPM Letter 720-6, issued on October 14, 1980, supplements the authorization and instructions found in FPM Letter 720-4. It extends the authorization to collect race, sex, and national origin data to include the collection of this information from applicants who are currently Federal employees. It also authorizes the use of minority group designator data to identify current Federal employees in underrepresented groups for FEORP skills banks and referral lists.

Letter 720-6 gives specific instructions concerning the use of OPM Form 1386 to capture these data and lists the changes which agencies are authorized to make to the form. It also specifies that agencies are not to use Item 3 (Handicapped Status) at this time. Agencies are reminded that providing this information is *voluntary* on the part of the applicant.

Finally the Letter states that agencies should begin collecting and analyzing data from applicants for all selection decisions.

New Handicap Data Collection Procedures

OPM has issued FPM Letter 298-12 dated November 17, 1980, which describes new procedures for the collection and submission of handicap data to the Central Personnel Data File (CPDF) for employees appointed under Schedule A, Section 213.3102(t) authority for mentally retarded persons; Schedule A, Section 213.3102(u) authority for severely physically handicapped persons; and Schedule B, Section 213.3202(k) authority for mentally restored persons.

New appointees, and employees who have served under the (t) and (u) appointing authorities since March 15, 1979, and those serving under Schedule B, Section 213.3202(k) since February 27, 1980, will be identified within CPDF as outlined in FPM letter 298-12.

The purpose of the new data collection procedures is to more accurately pinpoint the number of handicapped persons who are currently employed within the Federal Government. Federal employees not serving under any of the excepted appointing authorities mentioned above will not be affected by this FPM Letter.

New Pamphlet

The Selective Placement Programs Office at OPM has recently published a new pamphlet "Employment of Mentally Restored Persons". This brochure briefly explains the use of Federal selective placement procedures to assist mentally restored applicants in obtaining Federal employment, including the use of a new excepted appointing authority, Schedule B Section 213.3202(k). Individua copies of this pamphlet can be obtained by contacting the local Federal Job Information Center or an OPM regional or area office.

STANDARDS *continued*

located in the same organization as the personnel function. Organization design is a decision to be made by management in each agency.

- Occupational standards do not prescribe duties. The line supervisor assigns duties to a position. The classification standard then is used as a tool for determining the grade level, series and title of the position once the duties and responsibilities have been assigned.
- The equal opportunity classification standards cannot specify grade levels for positions at specific organizational levels. Grade levels are based on the duties, responsibilities and qualification requirements of the position. These classification elements are only indirectly related to the organizational echelon of a position. So, two positions may be at the same organizational level but have different grades because the level of responsibility is different.
- These occupational standards do little to either enhance or detract from the prestige of the occupation or the power and authority of people in it. The establishment of a standard provides a measure of recognition. But power, authority and prestige stem from other roots.

Nevertheless, these new standards will reduce uncertainty about grade levels and qualifications requirements. Therefore, they will have a positive impact on the evolution of the equal opportunity occupations in particular, and on EEO in general.

Jim O'Connell, contributing author, is an occupational specialist in the Standards Development Center, OPM. In sixteen years in the Federal Service he has worked in community development, management analysis, and personnel administration. In recent years he has served as a consultant on EEO, an agency chief classifier, an investigator of alleged merit system violations, an expert witness on job evaluation in Federal Court, and a developer of occupational standards.

Update:

An advance copy of the qualification standard for Civil Rights Analysis Series, GS-160, has been sent to the Government Printing Office for publication in Handbook X-118 and for distribution to subscribers.

Check with your Personnel Office or EEO office for a copy.

Spotlight

Editor: Catherine Penn

The Director of the United States of America Office of Personnel Management has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of public business required by law of this agency. Use of funds for printing this periodical has been approved by the Director, Office of Management and Budget through May 30, 1982.

Boston FEB Makes Scholarship Presentation

The Boston Federal Executive Board's Minority Opportunity Committee recently presented $500 to the scholarship drive of the United Negro College Fund during the Channel 38 Lou Rawls Parade of Stars Telethon.

Although the Minority Opportunity Committee (MOC) annually awards scholarships to deserving local youth desiring to pursue a college education, this marked the first time the board had made a presentation to an outside scholarship organization which specifically benefits minority students.

The Boston Federal Executive Board (BFEB) represents Federal agencies through New England. The issues and concerns of minority Federal workers in New England are the concern of the MOC.

Making the award on behalf of the Boston Federal Executive Board were MOC members, Charles Maher, Chairperson of the BFEB and Regional Director of the New England Office of Personnel Management (OPM); Cleotha Jackson, Chairperson of the MOC and Affirmative Employment Program Manager for OPM; Jeanne M. Colachico, Hispanic Program Manager and Federal Women's Program Manager for Defense Contract Administration Services Region Boston; Dagmar B. Gomez, Hispanic Program Manager and Federal Women's Program Manager for General Services Administration and Chair of Hispanic Council; and Irene Y. Wong, EEO Officer for Department of Agriculture. Accepting the award on behalf of the United Negro College Fund were John Bradbury, north east area development director and Loretta Davis, General Chairperson of the telethon.

The United Negro College Fund (UNCF) assists 41 historically Black colleges and universities throughout the United States by providing educational opportunities and scholarship assistance to some 48,000 students from 50 States and 62 countries. UNCF assists in paying faculty salaries, buying textbooks and equipment, expanding course offerings and, generally, in making these colleges more competitive in every way.

The BFEB joined numerous State, municipal, private industry, corporations, and a large number of individual contributors in raising over $110,000 for UNCF.

International Report

News of Uncle Sam's selective placement program efforts has reached Russia! On November 14, 1980, the Selective Placement Programs Office received a letter (in Braille yet) from an individual in Kiev, USSR, who asked for any Brailled information on our program.

Special Hiring Authority for 30 Percent or More Disabled Veterans–A Recap

The Civil Service Reform Act established a special noncompetitive hiring authority for veterans who are 30 percent or more disabled. The authority, which went into effect January 1, 1979, allows for noncompetitive conversion to career or career-conditional status.

The use of the authority in FY 1979 was not encouraging; only 137 appointments were made. Things are looking up though for FY 1980. 213 appointments were made in the first half of FY 1980.

The authority is extremely attractive and useful when an agency wishes to fill a vacant position quickly while at the same time accomplishing affirmative employment objectives. Remember, the SF-171 allows a 30 percent or more disabled veteran to identify this disability on the first page of the application.

For more information contact Veterans Employment Program Office, OPM, Room 6H35, 1900 E Street, NW., Washington, DC., Telephone: (202) 254-3058.

Waiver of Written Tests for VRA Eligibles–A Reminder

FPM Letter 307-14 (2/14/80) authorized agencies to waive written test requirements when making minimum qualification determinations of Veteran Readjustment Appointment (VRA) candidates.

VRA candidates need only possess the required experience, education, and training specified in the qualification standard used. With the waiver of a written test, those knowledges, skills, abilities, and other attributes measured by the test are instead measured by assessing the VRA appointee's performance during his/her two years of expected service. Successful performance of duties and completion of training agreement requirements are two conditions a VRA appointee must meet for conversion to permanent status.

FPM Chapter 307 will be revised in the near future to incorporate the contents of FPM Letter 307-14.

New Guide for Test Examiners

OPM's Personnel Research and Development Center, in conjunction with OPM's Selective Placement Programs Office has recently published a "Guide for Administering Examinations to Handicapped Individuals for Employment Purposes". This paper provides guidance for administering written tests to persons with severe physical handicaps. This pamphlet is initially being distributed only to OPM examining personnel. A limited number of single copies are available upon request from Dr. Mary Anne Nester, Personnel Research and Development Center, Office of Personnel Management, 1900 E Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20415.

Reminder:

Have A Happy Holiday Season

Spotlight

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United States of America
Office of Personnel Management

Office of
Affirmative Employment Programs
Washington, D.C. 20415

Official Business

Office of Personnel Management
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